

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 5-8, 10, 11 and 13-15 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 12 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claim 10 stands allowed. Claims 1, 8, 13 and 14 are amended. No new matter is added.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

The indication of allowable subject matter in claims 12-15 is appreciated, they being allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, and to include all of the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. As claims 12 and 14 are amended in response to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, and the subject matter of allowable claim 12 is included in revised claim 1 and claim 14 is rewritten in independent form, all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 12-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. As claim 12 is canceled, the rejection of that claim is moot. The rejection of claim 14 is respectfully traversed.

As the subject matter of allowable claim 12 is now recited in rewritten claim 1, and the subject matter of allowable claim 14 is amended in response to the rejection, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 12-14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, is respectfully requested.

III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 5 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,140,735 to Kato et al. (Kato) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,455,974 to Fogarty; claims 3 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable for the reasons applied to claim 1, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,122,705 to Kusase et al.; and claims 6 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kato and Fogarty, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,498,414 to Asao. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

As all pending claims recite allowable subject matter, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3, 5-8, 10, 11 and 13-15 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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